

REMARKS

Initially, Applicants would like to express their appreciation to the Examiner for indicating that claims 3, 4 and 5 would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims.

Upon entry of the present amendment, claims 2 and 3 will have been canceled, without prejudice and without disclaimer of the subject matter, and claim 1 will have been amended to substantially include the subject matter of allowable claim 3, as well as to correct informalities in the claim language and to more clearly define the invention. Claims 4-9 will likewise have been amended to correct informalities in the claim language and to more clearly define the invention.

Further, upon entry of the present amendment, claims 10-20 will have been submitted for the Examiner's consideration. In particular, new independent claims 10 and 16 substantially include the subject matter of indicated to be allowable claims 4 and 5, respectively. New dependent claims 11-15, which depend from claim 10, respectively recite the subject matter similar to that of dependent claims 5-9, and new dependent claims 17-20, which depend from claim 16, respectively recite the subject matter similar to that of dependent claims 6-9. Accordingly, since all pending claims recite allowable subject matter, or depend from claims that recite allowable subject matter, Applicants respectfully submit that all pending claims are in condition for allowance.

In the above-referenced Official Action, the Examiner rejected claims 1, 2 and 6-9 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) as being anticipated by FUJISAWA et al. (U.S. Patent No. 7,149,463). Although Applicants do not agree with the Examiner's rejection or the characterization of FUJISAWA et al., Applicants have amended the claims and have submitted new claims, as described above, to render all claims allowable, at least in accordance with the Examiner's

indication, merely in order to expedite prosecution and allowance of all pending claims. Thus, by the present Reply, Applicants are not acquiescing in the Examiner's rejection.

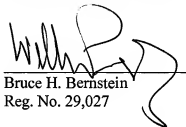
In view of the herein contained amendments and remarks, Applicants respectfully request reconsideration and withdrawal of previously asserted rejections set forth in the Official Action of January 11, 2007, together with an indication of the allowability of all pending claims, in due course. Such action is respectfully requested and is believed to be appropriate and proper.

Any amendments to the claims in this Reply, which have not been specifically noted to overcome a rejection based upon the prior art, should be considered to have been made for a purpose unrelated to patentability, and no estoppel should be deemed to attach thereto.

Should an extension of time be necessary to maintain the pendency of this application, the Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge any additional fee to Deposit Account No. 19-0089.

If the Examiner has any questions or comments regarding this response, or the present application, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned at the below-listed telephone number.

Respectfully submitted,  
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